

WYCOMBE CENTRE HALF TURNS 'PRO'

John signs on at B'mouth

JOHN Delaney, Wycombe Wanderers centre half for the last four seasons, signed on for Football League Third Division club Bournemouth on Saturday (writes Stuart Earp).

John, 30, travelled down to the club on Saturday morning and after looking over the set-up, decided to sign on. Wanderers chairman Jack Smethurst witnessed the signing.

The contract, over two years with a further two-year option, is ideal for Delaney after the F.A.'s new ruling calling all amateurs players. This means that when John finishes his professional career, he will be able to return to amateur soccer rather than remain in combination on Southern League football. John told me on Sunday he would like to return to Wycombe eventually.

He plans to move down and settle in the area in July and joins a club who have narrowly missed out in promotion for the last two seasons. They are managed by John Bond the former West Ham player.

Bond was highly impressed by Delaney when Bournemouth met Wycombe recently at Loakes Park. Wanderers won 2-1 with two Kenny Swain goals and apart from a generally faultless performance against one of the top third division marksmen Phil Boyer, John caught out the Bournemouth offside trap with the first free kick of the game.

He spotted that the visitors'

defence was moving up as he was about to take the kick and delayed it long enough to send Bournemouth racing back, much to the amusement of the crowd.

The Bournemouth game was one of many fine performances by the centre half who has been capped 16 times by England. Another gem that springs to mind was his game against Enfield in the Amateur Cup in 71/72. John scored both goals with superb headers to see Wycombe through 2-1.

It is John's tremendous ability from set piece situations that makes him such a danger. He patented many moves from the

near post, timing his runs perfectly. Two more memorable goals were against Spennymoor, when he ran half the length of the pitch to head home a glorious sweeping movement and against Kettering with a diving header. He also scored many goals from the penalty spot.

He plays his last matches for Wanderers on tour next week in Yugoslavia. John had the chance to tour with Bournemouth in Australia, New Zealand and Tahiti but turned it down as he was already committed with Wycombe.

He joins several former Wanderers in the professional ranks, amongst them Peter Sudaby and Paul Fushillo at Blackpool, John Pratt (Reading), Viv Busby (Luton) and Keith Blunt who is now coach at Portsmouth.

Facts & figures

JOHN Delaney, made 59 appearances for Wycombe Wanderers last season, scoring 11 goals. But perhaps the best facts and figures are in his Berks and Bucks Cup record.

He lost out in county cup competitions no less than five times from Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels. But his perseverance paid off in the end when Wanderers beat Slough Town 1-0 in this year's final at Chesham.

John was capped 16 times by England and also played several times for Great Britain's XI's. His record for the Berks and Bucks F.A. is almost unrivalled and he skipped them on many occasions.

In 1971/72 he made 54 appearances for Wycombe and scored 22 goals. The following season he played 56 games and scored 17 goals.